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HEADQUARTERS
U. S. STRATEGIC BOMBING SURVEY
(PACIFIC)
APO #234
C/O POSTMASTER, SAN FRANCISCO



INTERROGATION NO. 102

SUBJECT: ALEUTIAN Campaign and Defense of the
KURILES - Planning and Operations from November
1942 to August 1945.

Personnel Interrogated and Background of Each:

Commander Shigefuso HASHIMOTO was attached to the Navy headquarters in TOKYO from November 1940 to November 1942. His particular duty during this time was Russian intelligence. He served as navigation and communication officer on the staff of Commander FIFTH Fleet from November 1942 until June 1944. The staff Navy headquarters in TOKYO from June until November of 1944, when he went to the NE Area Air Fleet Staff. From February 1945 until August 1945 he served on the OMINATO Naval Garrison Staff and with the TWELFTH Air Fleet Staff.

Where interrogated: Rm. 618, MEIJI Bldg. Interrogator: J.S. RUSSELL,
Capt., USN.

Interpreter: D. BARTLETT and S. MILLSTEIN, Lt. Cdrs., USN. Allied Officers
Present: No additional.

SUMMARY: (All dates and times are those of TOKYO, Zone minus 9.)

In Commander HASHIMOTO's opinion the Japanese move into the ALEUTIANS was conceived as a flanking operation to the occupation of MIDWAY. Once KISKA and ATTU were occupied it was decided to hold them for the purpose of blocking a U.S. amphibious advance toward the Empire via the ALEUTIAN chain, and also to deny the use of the Western ALEUTIANS as bases from which long range bombers might operate. He said that the Japanese were aware in the latter part of 1942 that the U. S. had plans for a high altitude, long range bomber, and, in about February 1943, had information concerning the B-29. This information was later confirmed in a radio broadcast by an American general. He went on to say that the B-29 appeared in operation eight months later that the Japanese had estimated it might appear. When ATTU was retaken by the U. S., the Japanese expected long range bomber operations from MASSAOPE BAY.

Prior to the ALEUTIAN operations Japanese intelligence was to the effect that the U. S. had extremely light forces in the ALEUTIANS, possibly a few planes as far west as ADAK and KISKA. As of November 1942 their information indicated that in NORTH PACIFIC waters the U.S. had four cruisers, six or seven destroyers, and that one or two aircraft carriers might be in that area from time to time. There was also a rumor that two battleships might be operating there, but this he personally discounted.

Commander HASHIMOTO stated that, to the best of his recollection, the Japanese forces in the NORTH PACIFIC as of November 1942 were:

FIFTH FLEET - Commander in Chief: Vice Admiral HOSOGAYA

21st Cruiser Squadron - Vice Admiral HOSOGAYA
two CA - NACHI (FF), MAYA (on loan from SECOND
Fleet).

two CL - TAMA, KISO

1st Destroyer Squadron - Rear Admiral MORI
one CL - ABUKUM (F)

21st Destroyer Division, three DD-HATSUSHIMA,
WAKABA, HATSUHARU

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7th Destroyer Division

three DD - INAZUMA (or DEN), IKAZUCHI (or RAI), HIBIKI (or KYO)

Air Fleet of KIMIKAWA MARU:

- 1 AV - KIMIKAWA MARU
- 8 VO - three-seat, twin float, seaplanes.

Air Ashore at KISKA - Captain TAKAHASHI

- 4 VS - two-seat, single float, seaplanes
- 8 VF - single-seat, single float, seaplanes

51st Base Force - Rear Admiral AKIYAMA

- 5th Garrison Force, SNLF
- 51st Communication Unit, Navy.

Total Naval Personnel ashore estimated to be 4,000

Independent Army Force on KISKA - Brigadier General MINEKI

Total Army Personnel ashore at KISKA estimated to be 5000.

Army garrison force on ATTU

The primary mission of these forces was to defend against any U.S. westward movement through the ALEUTIANS.

Prior to the time that Commander HASHIMOTO joined the FIFTH Fleet Staff, and in about late September, a convoy of three transports and three destroy-

ers brought troops and equipment to ATTU. This was at the time when the original ATTU garrison (ABUKUMA) and three DD's carried personnel to ATTU

and ammunition and other supplies to KISKA. This was planned for and con-

summated during the period October to December 1942. A third convoy was

planned for during the period January to March, 1943. The weather was very

had in January. As time passed it became clearly evident that U.S. forces

were preparing to intercept the movement of transports, hence in March the

entire surface force available to the FIFTH Fleet was employed as escorts.

The tactical plan was to attract and destroy the U.S. Forces. This operation

resulted in the sea battle of 27 March 1943.

The Battle of the KOMANDORSKIS

The transports departed from KATAOKA (PARAMUSHIRO-SHIMUSHU) in two

groups. On 23 March the 4000-ton SANKO MARU left, escorted by the destroyer

USUGUMO. On 24 or 25 March the converted light cruiser ASAKA MARU and the

army transport SAKITO MARU left escorted by the FIRST Destroyer Squadron:

1 CL - ABUKUMA, and 4 DD's - WAKABA, HATSUSHIMO, IKAZUCHI, and INAZUMA.

Shortly thereafter the main body of the FIFTH Fleet sortied, comprised as

follows: 2 CA's - NACHI, Vice Admiral HOSOGAYA, commander FIFTH Fleet em-

barked; MAYA, "loaned" from the SECOND Fleet; 1 CL - TAMAMA.

The transports were loaded as follows:

SANKO MARU - supplies and ammunition, possibly some troops.

SAKITO MARU - troops, equipment, ammunition and supplies.

ASAKA MARU - staff and headquarters outfit (Commander HASHIMOTO

was not sure whether Col. YAMAZAKI was on ASAKA or SAKITO MARU, but

knew he was embarked, also Commander YASUNAMI of the Navy and Lt. Col.

ANDO of the Army), some supplies and equipment.

The second group was delayed because of a storm. The weather was bad

the first two days of the voyage. They reached the rendezvous position late

on 26 March and they spent the night of 26-27 March running approximately

60 miles north and south through the rendezvous point waiting for the

SANKO MARU and USUGUMO to join. The rendezvous point was selected at about

the latitude of ATTU and just outside the 600 mile radius from ADAK - the

Commander HASHIMOTO was below decks when the contact with the American force was made. When he arrived on the bridge the NACHI had just turned to the right, he believed, from a northerly heading to a southerly one in order to engage the enemy. He understood that the ASAKA MARU to the rear of the column had first made out and reported the enemy ships to the south. The guns were trained in the direction of the enemy, and the MARUs cleared to the northwest as all other ships closed up and prepared for action.

The NACHI normally carried three planes, but one of these had been left behind for overhaul. The MAYA also could carry three planes, but had none with her. Upon making contact with the enemy the NACHI's two planes were ordered to be launched; however, it took a long time to warm up the engines and they had not been catapulted when the NACHI opened fire with her main battery. Gun blast damaged the two-seater on the starboard catapult and it was subsequently jettisoned. The three-seater on the port catapult was launched and carried out reconnaissance and spotting duties throughout the action. Thereafter it landed at ATTU, but crashed on landing. The three-man crew were returned to the FIFTH Fleet about a month later by submarine.

The Americans opened fire almost simultaneously with the NACHI. The MAYA opened fire shortly thereafter. A loss of electric power prevented the NACHI from firing a second salvo for about thirty minutes. In the first five to ten minutes of action the NACHI received a hit at the after end of the bridge by a 15 cm. (6 in.) blue dye loaded shell, which killed five or six communication personnel and wounded twelve or thirteen others. A small fire, which broke out in the vicinity of the hit, was soon extinguished.

The American force was identified as follows; two destroyers with an OMAHA class light cruiser, followed by a PENSACOLA class heavy cruiser and two more destroyers. It appeared to Commander HASHIMOTO that the destroyers were stationed one to port and one to starboard of each of the heavy ships.

The action developed into a chase with the American ships making off to the westward. The TAMA did not fire for about thirty minutes because of the range. However, she worked up speed rapidly, and, to reduce the range in the pursuit, she cut inside and went to the van as the Japanese heavy cruisers came around to a southwesterly course. The FIRST Destroyer Squadron was ordered to open out to port to encircle the American force and make a torpedo attack. This plan failed due to a failure in communications. The cruisers went from 24 to 28 knots and the FIRST Destroyer Squadron failed to get the change of speed signal. By the time the signal was gotten through to them, they had lost considerable distance. They found it very difficult to close. As a result they did very little in the action except to follow in column. As a result of the delay of the FIRST Destroyer Squadron the Americans were able to escape.

The action continued on generally southwesterly and westerly courses. The Japanese tried to keep the action running away from ADAK. Air support for the Americans was expected to reach the battle area at 0700. The action was broken off at 0820 for several reasons. First, the air attack was overdue and considered imminent. Second, by this time the ammunition remaining was below the minimum prescribed by doctrine, and, if air attack developed, they would be without ammunition for defense against a coordinated surface ship attack. Third, the fuel consumption was high and there would not be sufficient remaining to return to base from a chase. Even the chance of sinking an American ship did not warrant continuing the action.

Torpedoes were used by the Japanese during the action, but under unfavorable conditions. The NACHI and MAYA carried twelve torpedoes; the TAMA, eight. NACHI and MAYA fired their starboard torpedoes, that is, six from each ship, about ten minutes after the action commenced. The TAMA fired none. The ABUKUMA carried eight torpedoes; each of her three destroyers, nine. ABUKUMA fired all her torpedoes at about two hours after the action commenced, while one destroyer, WAKADA, fired all of hers about two and one-half hours after the beginning of action. The other destroyers did not get close enough to fire even at long range.

not get close enough to fire even at long range.

In main battery fire NACHI and MAYA each expended about 900 rounds of the 1100 rounds of twenty cm. ammunition carried. TAMA expended about 45 rounds of the possibly 500 rounds of 14 cm. ammunition carried. ABUKUMA and the destroyers expended very little ammunition. The ships' anti-aircraft guns were used very little because there was no aircraft attack, and it was desired to save ammunition for that expected event; however, they may have been used briefly for anti-destroyer effect.

At about the end of the action the TAMA, under Commander FIFTH Fleet's order, executed a reversal of course and again took station at the rear of the cruiser column.

The weather, although very bad on the preceding two days, was good on the day of the battle. The wind was from the northwest, he believed - velocity five to six meters per second (12-12 knots). The sea was almost calm with visibility 30,000 to 35,000 meters (16-19 miles). The sky was solidly overcast at 2500 meters (8200 feet), although it cleared later in the day. Sunrise on the day of battle was at 0320.

The Japanese estimated that the damage to the American force was as follows:

(a) Two hits observed on the heavy cruiser which reduced her speed.

The NACHI plane reported that the heavy cruiser was at one time stopped, and was trailing oil. The plane shadowed the American force until 0900.

(b) Medium damage to one destroyer.

Commander HASHIMOTO was aware that the American destroyers had attempted a torpedo attack and himself counted two torpedo wakes. There were no torpedo hits.

The Japanese thought highly of the American defense tactics. The smoke screen was well laid. They could make few hits because of the erratic courses taken by the targets and because of the smoke. They had no fire control radar. The salvoe from the American heavy cruiser landed close aboard all around the NACHI with a preponderance of close misses ahead. The pattern of the fall of shot appeared to Commander HASHIMOTO to be encompassed by two superimposed ellipses with their major axes at right angles to each other. He said the dispersion was very small - about 50 meters (55 yards) - and had it been greater, hits would have been made.

Damage to Japanese ships was all above the waterline. No ship suffered underwater flooding, and no machinery derangement resulted from enemy action.

The Japanese neither planned nor had air support. Beside a shortage of suitable airplanes, the airfields within possible range were covered with snow and unserviceable. At this time there were airfields at MATSUWA Island, and at MUSASHI, at the south end of PARAMUSHIRO. A field was under construction, but not yet serviceable, at SURIBACHI. The field at KATAOKA was not yet begun.

After the sea battle there were insufficient facilities at PARAMUSHIRO for repairs and supplies, so the force was withdrawn to the Empire, using the ports of YOKOSUKA, SASEBO and MAIZURU. While plans were being developed for a fourth supply operation, ATTU was taken by the U. S.

There were many plans laid to bring aid to ATTU, but the American control of the air prevented any hope of success, so the idea was finally abandoned. During this time the 24th Air Flotilla, Rear Admiral YAMADA, was based at PARAMUSHIRO with 36 fighter planes and 36 land-based attack planes (BETTIES). The fighters remained as cover for PARAMUSHIRO, but the land-based attack planes made two sorti against the U. S. forces which were attacking ATTU, (May 1943). Owing to fog and the fatigue of flight personnel, such operations were not very successful. Commander HASHIMOTO was not very familiar with the air missions against ATTU. Of the two missions, one on

23 May and one on 24 May 1943, he believed each was a flight of nine land-based attack planes (BETTIES). The first flight attacked two American destroyers off ATTU and believed they sank one. Three of the nine planes were lost; two, to anti-aircraft fire and one landed in the sea before reaching base on the return flight. The second mission, he believed, also lost three planes, but he did not know how. The second mission may have been participated in by more than nine planes, since there was a possibility that the flight was augmented by planes from a second 18-plane squadron.

The question then arose as to what to do with KISKA. During the ALEUTIAN operations the defense of Paramushiro had not been adequately prepared and this was a factor in planes concerning KISKA. Accordingly, an operation was envisaged for the evacuation of KISKA in order to reinforce PARAMUSHIRO. It was understood that the evacuation of KISKA must be effected unobserved. The plan therefore called for a display of activity which would lead the U.S. forces to believe that preparations were being made for a strong defense of the island, in order to cover the true intention of withdrawing.

The first plan for the evacuation of KISKA was to employ submarines. For this purpose the FIRST Submarine Squadron was attached to the FIFTH Fleet with about 15 submarines of the I-78 class. Between the end of May and 10 June, 1943, about 700 persons were removed by submarine, but this proved to be a lengthy and hazardous operation. The combination of radar and air cover exposed the submarines whenever they surfaced and about four were sunk (I-7, I-24, I-35 or 36).

Since the operation became too costly in submarines the plan was changed to one which would effect the evacuation by a dash by surface ships: DD's or CL's. Twelve destroyers and three light cruisers took part in the operations. Three attempts were made. The first two were unsuccessful. At the conclusion of each attempt the ships returned to PARAMUSHIRO. The dates of departure for the first two attempts, to the best of Commander HASHIMOTO's memory were 20 June and 30 June.

The third attempt was successful. Commander HASHIMOTO participated as a staff officer on board the TAMA in which Commander FIFTH Fleet, Vice Admiral KAWASE, flew his flag. The force sortied from PARAMUSHIRO KAIKYO on 22 July. The track out was roughly SW to 48°N, 160°E, thence along the 48th parallel of latitude to 175°E, thence directly to the SW tip of KISKA ISLAND. The route was chosen as one through areas of highest probability of fog, and reasonably secure from U. S. air search. (The track was given from memory and Commander HASHIMOTO stated that he might be in error as much as 60 miles) Two destroyers collided en route and had to be sent back to PARAMUSHIRO. On 25 July a radar intercept was made on 110 megacycles bearing 105 degrees, true, from TAMA, the leading ship in column. This was thought to be an American submarine's search radar. It swept past them three times, then closed down for 30 minutes, when it swept thrice and closed down again--this cycle continuing. Avoiding action was taken and no contact was made. The Japanese cruisers had surface search radar, but it was not used successfully, due largely to the poor training of personnel with resulting poor operating technique, and to the difficulties of maintenance. Radio silence was maintained by the force except for two brief communications which TAMA exchanged with the garrison to request weather and to give information of the time of embarkation. For these a Japanese submarine frequency and code were used.

On the afternoon of 27 July the TAMA stood by alone about 30 miles SW of KISKA Island, while the remainder of the force under Commander, FIRST Destroyer Squadron, Rear Admiral KIMURA, went in to take off the garrison. These ships were the two light cruisers, ABUKUMA (F) and KISO, and nine destroyers; KAZAGUMO, MAKIGUMO, YUGUMO, AKIGUMO, HIBIKI, SAMIDARE, NAGANAMI, WAKADA and HATSUSHIMO. The ships made a landfall on CAPE ST. STEPHEN, the southwest tip of KISKA ISLAND, and followed the coastline up the west side of the island around the north end and down the east coast into KISKA HARBOR. The embarkation was completed in about one hour. On coming out the ships followed the reverse of the track going in. Rendezvous with the TAMA was effected and the return to PARAMUSHIRO was made over essentially the same route as that followed on the outbound voyage. There were no enemy contacts on the return voyage. The Japanese had the impression that the withdrawal of the KISKA garrison had been made without detection.

Following the successful evacuation of personnel from KISKA, the reinforcing of the PARAMUSHIRO-SHIMUSHU area went forward. Leaving a defense force in this area all remaining available personnel were taken to the Empire for training, training aimed at the defense of the NORTHERN KURILES. During this period (July to October, 1943) no cruisers nor destroyers were lost; however, three or four transports or cargo ships were sunk.

During the closing months of 1943 and the early months of 1944, the Japanese were confident that they had a sufficient garrison in the North to defend PARAMUSHIRO. This, together with the fact that the Americans did not make a determined attack in the North, caused the Japanese to look to the defense of the SOUTHERN KURILES. Hence, during the period February to July 1944, the entire KURILE chain was reinforced with about two divisions of Army troops.

In these reinforcing operations a severe shipping loss was incurred, ten ten or more ships being sunk by U.S. submarines. Because of the growing hazard of supply and apprehension over the possibility of an American landing in HOKKAIDO or NORTH HONSHU the troops were brought to the south. The removal of the Army troops to HOKKAIDO, and the Navy to OMINATO, occupied the FIFTH Fleet during the period February through June 1945. Defenses were being prepared in these areas when the war ended.

U. S. air raids from ATTU and the ALEUTIANS were not severe, and, by the number of sorties, were considered to be in the nature of training flights on the part of the Americans. Damage ashore was minimized by the fact that tunnel defenses were highly developed. Flare illumination of night bombing targets was believed to be generally ineffective due to haze and the prevalence of clouds and fog. Commander HASHIMOTO said that he respected greatly that the Americans flew and attacked in weather which the Japanese considered impossible for air operations.

RANDOM COMMENTS

Commander HASHIMOTO did not think highly of Japanese submarines. They obtained very little intelligence, were not aggressive in making attacks, were poor in evasive tactics, and the boats themselves were large and unwieldy. In general, they were not a successful arm of the fleet.

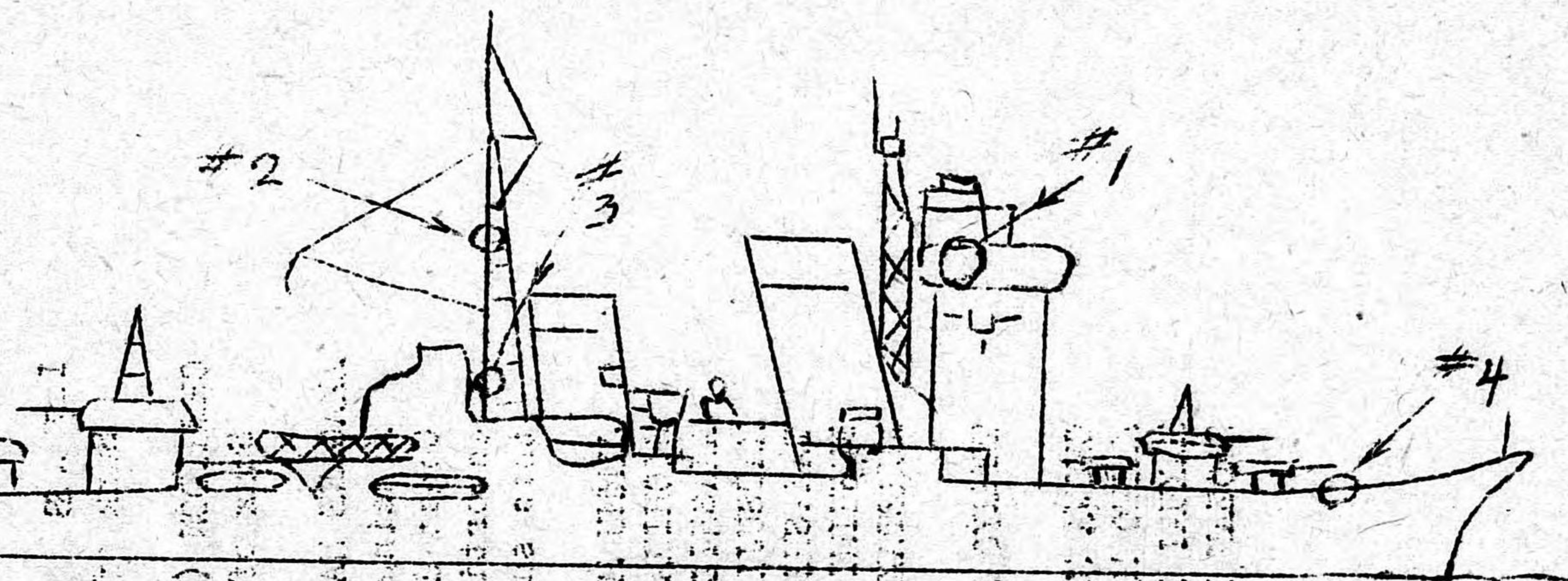
Two to three Japanese submarines operated in the Battle of ATTU, May 1943. Two were stationed to the north, and one to the south. The one to the south was reported by the troops ashore to have sunk one U.S. ship. The crew of the submarine did not make the claim, nor did they confirm the sinking.

SHIPPING CASUALTIES IN THE ALEUTIAN CAMPAIGN

Commander HASHIMOTO gave from memory the following casualties to ships:

- KASUMI - DD (1500 ton HATSUHARU Class) Sept '42 Bomb
Heavily damaged off shore at KISKA
- HATSUHARU - DD
Very heavily damaged off shore at KISKA Sept '42 Bomb
- NENOHI - DD
Sunk off AGATTU June (?) '42 Sub.
- USUGUMO - DD
Sunk off ATSUKESHI, HOKKAIDO May '44 Sub.
- SHIRAKUMO - DD
Sunk at ATSUKESHI, HOKKAIDO April '44 Sub.

NACHI



Hit #1 0 + 5 to 10 Min. 6 In. Blue Dye, Stbd to Port, Killed 3 communication Personnel, Started small fire

Hit #2 0 + 30 min. --?--

Hit #3 --?-- Started Small Fire

Hit #4 0 + 45 Min. 6 In. ? Penetrated one deck, damaged living quarters which were vacant, Injured one Person at No. 2 Turret

Personnel Casualties: 6 to 7 Killed, 20 Injured, of whom 12 died.

MAYA

No Damage
(3)
(3)
(3)
(3)
(3)

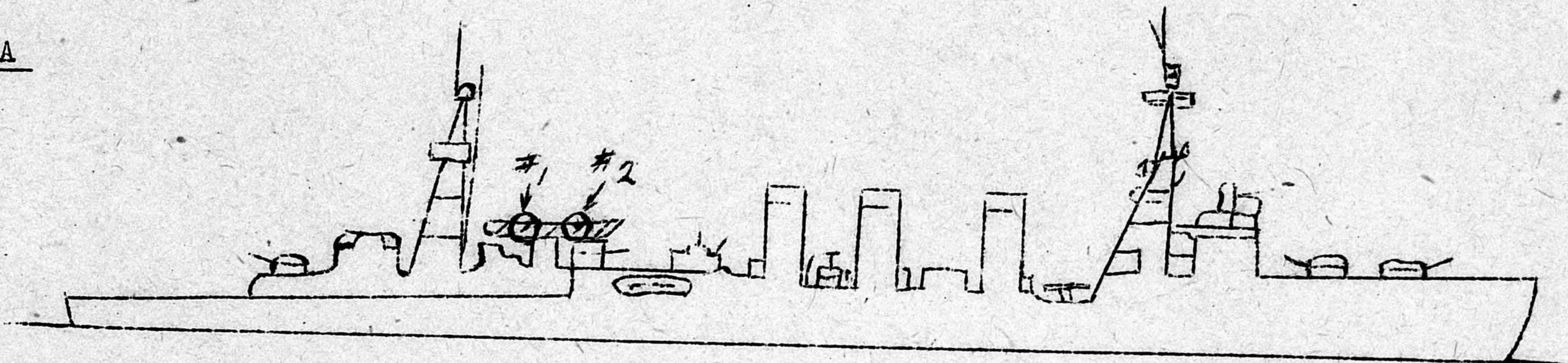
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ISHIGAKI - PG Sunk off MATSUWA, KURILES	May '44	Sub.
KASADO - PG Seriously damaged near OTARU, Western HOKKAIDO.	May '45	Sub.
RO-68 or -65 - SS Sunk off KISKA	Oct '42	(?)
I-21 - SS Sunk near KISKA (?)	May '43	(?)
I-24 - SS Sunk off ATTU	May '43	(?)
I-35 or -36 - SS Sunk off ATTU	May '43	(?)
I-7 - SS Sunk off KISKA	June '43	(?)
CHERIDON (CHELBOURNE?) MARU, 3500 ton Sunk off at ATTU	Dec '42	Bomb
AKAGANE MARU, 4500 ton Missing 60-100 miles west of ATTU Coast defense ship from PARAMUSHIRO had just completed escorting, and heard gunfire over the horizon after leaving this ship.	Jan - Feb '43	Gunfire
JIMMU MARU, sunk Off PARAMUSHIRO	Apr '43	Sub.
NICHIRAN MARU, sunk off ATSUKESHI, HOKKAIDO	March '44	Sub.
AKASHIZAN MARU, sunk off ETOROFU ISLAND	March '44	Sub.
MATSUJI MARU, sunk near RASHOWA, KURILES	April '44	Sub.
TAKASHIMA MARU, sunk off ARAITO ISLAND	May '44	Sub.
FUSHIMI MARU, sunk off ETOROFU ISLAND	June '44	Sub.
KURETAKE MARU, sunk off NAKA SHIRETOKO, KARAFUTO	May '45	Sub.
TENRYO MARU, sunk off NAKA SHIRETOKO, KARAFUTO	May '45	Sub.
CHOWA MARU, sunk off ERIMO ZAKI, HOKKAIDO	May '45	Sub.
KAIHO MARU, sunk off ERIMO ZAKI, HOKKAIDO	May '45	Sub.
HAKUAI MARU, sunk off ARAITO ISLAND	June '45	Sub.
ZAOZAN MARU, sunk off ARAITO ISLAND	June '45	Sub.

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TAMA



2 Hits, Details Unknown

ABUKUMA

No Hits

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